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A critical study of John Webster's borrowings in The Duchess of Malfi

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A CRITICAL STUDY OF

JOHN WEBSTER'S BORROWINGS

IN

THE DUCHESS OF MALFI

by

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Table of Contents

Abstract

This study attempts to analyze the degree of transmutation which John Webster's borrowed material in The Duchess of Malfi undergoes. It attempts to illustrate the changes Webster made in the lines and phrases which he took from six different writers and to show how he successfully integrates these passages into the poetry of his play.

Providing first an overall description of Webster's main poetic techniques, with special emphasis on those techniques which derive from his borrowing habits, the paper proceeds to minute inspection of individual passages culled from Sir Philip Sidney, Michel de Montaigne, John Donne, Joseph Hall, Stefano Guazzo and Pierre Matthieu. Each author was chosen for a somewhat different reason -- Sidney because of the wealth of material which he provided, and because of the degree of transmutation many of his passages experienced; Montaigne for the same reasons but also to demonstrate that Webster's indebtedness was not in the intellectual, but in the artistic realm; Donne, because we could exhaust the borrowings from him without being too superficial; and Hall, Matthieu and Guazzo simply for more examples suitable for detailed examination.

The study includes many passages which remained unchanged and some which were not incorporated skillfully

into the play in order to show that sometimes Webster's borrowed material was not improved upon and that sometimes it should not have been borrowed in the first place. However, the examples do prove that Webster was generally successful in his plagiaristic artistry, and that he betters what he borrows.

The doctrine of imitation, widely accepted in seventeenth century England, was not a new development. Throughout the sixteenth century and even earlier, the proper method of instructing students how to write was by imitation of the great classic writers, Terence, Plautus, Cicero and Seneca. There evolved a common pool of poetic diction as everyone drew upon the same sources or simply parroted one another. The Elizabethan audience cultivated a special passion for the epigram and the neatly turned phrase, for the sententiae so readily found in Seneca and others. Collections of these phrases were made by the hundreds, and the dramatists incorporated the phrases into their plays to satisfy the Elizabethan appetite.[1]

John Webster was in the midst of this literary tradition.[2] It is a long established fact that he was a great borrower of other writers' literary gems. John Russell Brown writes, "Few borrowed so widely ... and ... so repeatedly" as Webster,[3] and R. W. Dent adds, "More than three fourths of Webster could be traced, I suspect, if only we had access to all the works he employed."[4] As Webster read, he must have jotted down in his commonplace book every striking phrase, vivid image, and moral maxim that he came across. No Elizabethan playwright compares with Webster in the extensive use of borrowed material.[5]

The purpose of this paper, however, is not to determine the extent of Webster's borrowings,[6] but to analyze the transformation that these borrowings undergo, to see what Webster does to the passages he takes from others, how he adapts them into passages of superb poetry in The Duchess of Malfi.

Before we begin close inspection of Webster's verbal borrowings, it is necessary to recognize the important contributions to this phase of Webster study. John Addington Symonds was the first to note Webster's use of a commonplace book.[7] However, he was overly cautious and failed to realize the vast extent of Webster's borrowings. Charles Crawford deserves the credit for the discovery of Webster's extensive use of sources.[8] In 1906-07, Crawford published his brilliant Collectanea, citing many verbal borrowings from Sidney, Montaigne, Donne, Jonson and Chapman. The Collectanea was responsible for opening up a whole new area of source study for Websterites.

Then Webster's foremost editor, F. L. Lucas, published his four volume, monumental edition of Webster's works in 1928.[9] Lucas, too, realized the vast extent of Webster's indebtedness to others for the lines in his plays, and he increased the list of Webster's creditors. Furthermore, Lucas was interested in more than simply citing the sources for passages in Webster's plays, and he provided a brilliant discussion of Webster's

borrowing techniques.[10] His conclusions are largely accepted by Dent and by this present study. He writes, "These methods of marqueterie are very curious and interesting; their extent ... may well astonish; yet they need no apology. It is extraordinary how the ideas and phrases thus borrowed seem to change as they enter Webster's atmosphere. They come alive. Montaigne's honest prose quickens into poetry.... We should indeed never have discovered what an amazingly original author he /Webster/ is, had he not plagiarized so widely. Webster remains... one of the great writers whom borrowing has not impoverished, but enriched. Like Midas, what they touch, they turn to gold."[11] Lucas adds further examination to some of the specific borrowings in the commentaries which follow each play.

Marcia Lee Anderson made a valuable contribution to the study of verbal sources in 1939, when she discussed Webster's indebtedness to Pettie's translation of Stephano Guazzo's La Civile Conversatione.[12] Miss Anderson divided Webster's imitation into three general kinds: 1. "the use of proverbs and 'sentences' little altered but striking in their application;" 2. "the incorporation of witty sayings, descriptions, and figures of speech characteristically modified;" and 3. "ideas or suggestions which form the basis of an argument or a situation."[13] After discussing the characteristics of

each of these areas, she surveys the passages Webster borrowed from Guazzo, showing how he moulded them into the poetry of his play.

Following Miss Anderson's work, many brief articles appeared in the scholarly journals and periodicals attributing passages in Webster to some previously unnoted source. These articles are too numerous and too minor to mention here.[14] A major service to this phase of source study was performed by R. W. Dent in 1960, when he collected all the previously scattered identifications and included some new discoveries of his own.[15] John Webster's Borrowing is by far the most complete and thorough study of Webster's imitation to date. It is divided into two sections, a lengthy introduction in which Dent reduces to generalizations all the known facts concerning Webster's imitative methods, and an exhaustive commentary which lists the source of every known borrowing in Webster's non-collaborative plays -- The White Devil, The Duchess of Malfi, and The Devil's Law Case.

The present study was greatly facilitated by Dent's work. In every instance, except where otherwise pointed out, Dent's identification of source passages has been accepted.[16] Dent, however, was primarily interested in identification of sources rather than in the transmutation. Lucas did some analytic study and examination

of Webster's conversion of borrowed material into lines of great poetry. However, further analysis and illustration of Webster's "alchemy" is needed. This study proposes to fill that need.

Yet, one more recent work must be mentioned before proceeding to the commentary -- John R. Brown's Revels Editions of The White Devil and The Duchess of Malfi.[17] Brown provides introductory sections to both his editions in which he deals, in part, with Webster's verse and habits of borrowings. His textual annotations, moreover, recognize (following Dent) the sources of most of Webster's borrowings. Lastly, Brown provides a handy author index of the imitations at the end of each of his editions. His conclusions are those of Lucas and Dent, already summarized, that Webster betters what he borrows:

> ...Webster's 'imitation' was idiosyncratic, occasionally to a fault; he added further epithets, reversed the sense, particularized the general, altered the rhythm, transposed the key. So, for example, William Alexander's complacent:
>
> Ease comes with ease, where all by paine buy paine,
> Rest we in Peace, by warre let others raigne.
>
> becomes Webster's
>
> This busy trade of life appears most vain,
> Since rest breeds rest, where all seek pain by pain.
> (The White Devil, V.vi. 273-274)
>
> ...Webster did not borrow with a quiescent mind; rather, imitation quickened his own invention.[18]

These conclusions will be illustrated in the commentary; it will be seen exactly how "imitation quickened his own invention." A brief summary of the general character

of Webster's verse, as described by Brown, will provide us with the necessary overall viewpoint with which to view the specific borrowings in the commentary.

Brown notes that Webster's sudden, powerful, and often devastating language is in keeping with his love of shock in the unfolding of his plots. The structure of The Duchess of Malfi is based upon swift movement -- the Duchess' brief courtship of Antonio and her rapid production of children -- and so is the verse. It is a condensed and concentrated poetic language full of sudden turns and reversals in the dialogue. The point that needs to be made is that this type of verse not only fits the type of play; it also arises naturally out of the method of composition. The verse structure stems primarily from Webster's method of imitation, his seizing of bits and snatches here and there and fitting them together like a mosaic.

Brown's thesis again is that the turbulent action of the play is reinforced by a dialogue which delights in swift revelation, contrast, antithesis, and change. He describes Webster's lines as short and sharp, adding that a single speech may even be divided into brief phrases and snatches of ideas. Julia says, for instance,

> To-morrow! get you into my Cabinet,
> You shall have it with you: do not delay me,
> No more then I do you: I am like one
> That is condemn'd: I have my pardon promis'd,
> But I would see it seal'd: Go, get you in
> (D.M., V.ii.232-236)[19]..

Brown's discussion of Webster's verse is admirable, to say the least. He also describes Webster's habit of mixing poetry with prose for no apparent reason. Most of the play is written in blank verse, but occasionally, Webster incorporates prose or even mixes blank verse with prose in the same speech. Brown analyzes the dialogue between Bosola and Castruchio at the opening of Act II in this light. The dialogue begins in prose; then, when an Old Lady enters, Bosola jumps into blank verse without a pause. After Antonio enters, the dialogue fluctuates between prose and poetry. It shifts back into blank verse upon the entrance of the Duchess, only to return to prose when the Old Lady reenters. Brown's conclusion is that Webster's use of prose is, by and large, limited to idle discussion or witty repartee.[20]

The turbulence and contrast of the plot, then, is reflected in the shifts of language, either within extended dialogue, a single passage, or in repartee and a mixture of prose and poetry. In the more serious moments of the play, the short, quick lines take on a poetic utterance of intensity and power. The brief phrases evoke lines that are both clear and memorable.

After discussing the general characteristics of the verse,[21] Brown turns to Webster's imagery. While he observes that the imagery is of a limited range, he does not state strongly enough that the use of imagery

likewise grows out of Webster's borrowing habits. While images on death, mutability, or disease are abundant, true image clusters are rare. Webster, instead, tends to achieve and maintain mood or atmosphere by repeating images similar in tone which have been borrowed from various sources. An example of such repetition to enhance mood can be found in the echo scene (V.iii). The atmosphere is deathlike, with the image of a ruined abbey drawn from Montaigne, images of decay and disease of both men and the church, also culled from Montaigne, further images of doomsday and mutability, plus the dismal echo itself, a popular device, "probably based on an undiscovered source."[22] Webster's variations in images and image patterns, then, stem from the large number of different images drawn from his sources. The emblem books, the prose works, and even some of the plays of the day provided Webster with a great variety of images which he incorporated into his plays.[23]

Brown points out that Webster was particularly fond of rhetorical questions, incorporating them into his text whenever possible. He failed to note, however, Webster's fondness for questions in general, questions which enabled Webster to deal more effectively with his source material. There are many such questions in The Duchess of Malfi. For instance, Bosola asks questions

and answers them as well:

> ... what's this flesh? a little cruded milke, phantasticall puffe-paste: our bodies are weaker then those paper prisons boyes use to keepe flies in: more contemptible: since ours is to preserve earth-wormes: didst thou ever see a Larke in a cage? such is the soule in the body... .
> (D.M., IV.ii.123-128)

Both questions are answered from sources. The first answer comes from Donne's "Of the Progresse of the Soule," II.165-166, and the second answer is a common proverb.

Indeed almost every ten or fifteen lines a question is asked. This method has the advantage of breaking up long monologues and parcelling them over a series of brief, dramatic interchanges. The answers to the interjected questions are usually found in Webster's sources. An example of this procedure, in which a long passage in the source is broken up by the use of questions and interruptions occurs in III.ii.61-85, which we shall discuss later.

Furthermore, the questions often call for moral answers, and these answers are given in Polonius-like clichés, proverbs and bits of folk wisdom as was seen above. Such apothegms, stuck in not only after questions, have caused much critical comment. Ian Jack is the most devastating of the critics. He writes, "If one reads through both plays noting down the sententiae and moralizing asides, one finds oneself in the possession

of a definite attempt at a 'philosophy', a moral to the tale."[24] Jack feels, however, that the tale is completely incongruous with any moral that may be derived from the maxims. He thus sees the plays as examples of Webster's "artistic insincerity."[25]

Travis Bogard compares Webster with Chapman in many respects and notes that both were fond of "the explicit statement of general moral and political nature." He concludes that "Both the omnipresent sententious couplet and passages offering a more discursive, detailed examination of the society of the tragedies are so frequent in both dramatists that neither can completely acquit himself of the charge that he devised his episodes to provide opportunity for generalized ethical evaluation of court life."[26]

Whatever reason one wants to provide for the apothegms, he must accept them as a part of Webster's work. Every reader of Webster is immediately aware of them as they pop up, seemingly at random, throughout the play. For most readers, however, the maxims cause only momentary irritation due to the more pressing matters of plot movement immediately at hand. In evaluating the aphorisms, it is again necessary to remember how they were presented and for whom they were intended. These lines were certainly not show stoppers, and there was little time to ponder over them.

Moreover, the Jacobean audience was only slightly removed from the tradition of the morality play, and the moralizing tags surely would not have struck them as out of place or unnatural. Aphoristic passages are characteristic of all Jacobean drama. Even so, the sophisticated audience of today finds them incongruously wooden and stilted. We are not impressed with the neat couplet and we do not want the action held up for an irrelevant moral apologue. The obvious result is to brand Webster inept. This, however, is a hasty judgement to be made against a playwright who has been labeled the "most powerful dramatic poet after Shakespeare"[27] and considered such by many competent critics. It seems inconsistent to think that Webster did not have pretty good reasons for incorporating the aphorisms into his drama, to think that they are mere, careless insertions which do not make sense.

Perhaps Webster endeavored to show that even his seamy little worlds of intrigue were not completely isolated or ignorant of a greater world of moral order and value. Or perhaps, as a recent study has attempted to prove, "these passages are in reality functional and of poetic value; for they are more often than not, image-bearing sections of thematically-related irony and paradox."[28] At any rate, this paper is not concerned with possible explanations for the inclusion of aphoristic

passages. The discussion merely seeks to note another characteristic of Webster's verse which stems from his borrowing habits and to state that we should not condemn Webster too harshly for the practice. In the words of James Calderwood, "No one denies that The Duchess of Malfi is rich in unintegrated moral comment, or that there are excrescences of plot and inconsistencies of character. But these faults can be granted without having to concede either that the play is a dramatic failure or that Webster is morally despicable."[29]

This discussion of Webster's verse will provide the necessary background for detailed examination of specific passages in The Duchess of Malfi. A few more traits, also described by Brown, will be apparent in the commentary: Webster's fondness for parallelisms ("Let good men, for good deeds, covet good fame," I.i.315) and his fondness for couplets to end scenes and acts ("Bent to all swaies of the Oppressors will./ There's no deepe Valley, but neere some great Hill," III.v.168-169). Also multiple word play, usually bawdy, puns, quibblings, and stories within the play such as Antonio's retelling of Daphne's plight and of Paris' judgement (III.ii.32-52) or the parable of Reputation (III.ii.143-159) will be seen. Lastly, it can be observed that Webster can and does maintain a characteristic language appropriate to a single character, in spite of his epigrammatic dialogue.

Ferdinand constantly speaks of his sister in hurried, sensual tones, no matter whom he speaks to or what the source of his saying is.

> Damne her, that body of hers... (IV.i.146)
>
> Those lustfull pleasures... (I.i.363)
>
> ... farewell, lusty Widowe. (I.i.381)
>
> ... a sister dampn'd -- she's loose i'th' hilts:
> Growne a notorious Strumpet. (II.v.5-6)
>
> Enjoy thy lust still, and a wret/c_7hed life...
> (III.ii.115)

Brown's conclusion, and the conclusion here, is that it is in tone that Webster maintains continuity, rather than in exact language or precise logical organization. Within each passage and train of thought are digressions, reversals, and shifts in imagery and emphasis. Unity comes in tone through primary images -- ponderings on death, disease and lust. There is no consistent idea on which an extended dialogue turns: there is no constructed development. The point not made explicit enough by Brown is that this is only to be expected because Webster works best in short bursts and quick turns since his information lies before him piecemeal, fragmentary. Webster's method of composing dialogue dictates the type of dialogue that he writes. Hence, short speeches and phrases abound, and where an occasionally prolonged utterance is called for, it comes in piled-on lines and numerous impressions, usually gleaned from more than one source.

The jerky, abrupt quality of Webster's verse, then, is what makes it great. He ejaculates short phrases, dramatically and powerfully, usually in the right place and at the right time.

> Cover her face: Mine eyes dazell: she di'd yong.
> (IV.ii.281)

or

> Returne (faire soule) from darkenes, and lead mine
> Out of this sencible Hell ... (IV.ii.368-369)

Webster is, indeed, "an absolute master of the terse and imaginative dramatic phrase."[30]

As was mentioned, the purpose of this discussion on the general characteristics of Webster's verse has been to provide an overall outlook for which to view the commentary. Such an outlook is needed to guard against a partial view that might be gained from the commentary. In inspecting individual passages, it is possible to forget how such passages fit into the overall scheme of the play. The foregoing discussion should act as a safeguard against such fragmentation.

Webster's Use of the Arcadia in The Duchess of Malfi

Sir Philip Sidney provides an excellent starting point for minute inspection of Webster's verbal borrowings, partly because Webster's debt to Sidney in The Duchess of Malfi is extensive, and partly because Webster made some striking revisions of Sidney's images and phrases.

One learns a great deal about Webster's artistic methods by examining the lines from the Arcadia which appear in The Duchess of Malfi. First and most apparent, he realizes the great extent to which Webster is indebted to Sidney. Webster's definite borrowings begin in II.ii.69-70, and from that point to the end of the play, there are thirty-four passages certainly and eight probably lifted from the Arcadia. But quantity is not the only thing that stuns the examiner. The quality of the borrowed material is also immediately evident. Sidney had a gift for writing vivid lines and phrases, and Webster made good use of that gift. It is a great tribute to Sidney that almost all of the lines borrowed remain intact. A few examples will illustrate what slight change Webster made in the majority of the appropriated lines. In III.ii.69-99, there are five different borrowings from Sidney, and all of these five are relatively unchanged. Lines 69-70 read:

You have cause to love me, I entred you into my heart
Before you would vouchsafe to call for the keyes.

Sidney's lines are hardly disturbed:

... his fame had so framed the way to my mind,
that his presence so full of beauty, sweetnes,
and noble conversation, had entred there before
he vouchsafed to call for the keyes.
(Arcadia, I, XI. (Wks., I.69)

The only significant change is from "mind" to "heart," and this change is, of course, needed to make the image appropriate.

Nine lines later, Sidney is again copied almost word for word.

For know whether I am doomb'd to live, or die,
I can doe both like a Prince.
(D.M., III.ii. 78-79)

The lines from Arcadia are:

Lastly, whether your time call you to live or
die, doo both like a prince.
(Arcadia, I,IV. (Wks., I.25)

The very next lines in The Duchess of Malfi are pirated from Arcadia in a similar manner.

Ferd. Die then, quickle:
Vertue, where art thou hid? what hideous thing
Is it, that doth ecclipze thee?
Duch. 'Pray sir heare me:
Ferd. Or is it true, thou art but a bare name,
And no essentiall thing?
(D.M., III.ii. 81-85)

This dialogue is lifted from Arcadia, II,I. (Wks., I.146).

O Vertue, where doost thou hide thy selfe? or what
hideous thing is this which doth eclips thee? or is
it true that thou weart never but a vaine name, and
no essentiall thing...?

The only significant change that Webster makes is in

the breaking up of the prose into two separate responses. He thereby increases the tension and swiftness of the scene by introducing the Duchess only to have her cut off. As we noted, Webster often breaks up longer passages by parcelling them out over a series of verbal interchanges.[31]

Most of the time then, Webster changes Sidney's lines very little, if at all. Webster simply seizes upon well expressed phrases in Sidney and interjects them into his moving narrative almost verbatim. Once in awhile, however, Webster appears not quite satisfied with Sidney's phrase. This dissatisfaction is usually seen in a wordy or unpicturesque image, in which case, Webster will attempt to prune and sharpen the image and to make it clearer, less cumbersome and more specific. At such times, Webster almost invariably succeeds in creating a more striking image. In Act III.v. 92-95, Webster rewrites one of Sidney's images with amazing effectiveness. The image, as it appears in Arcadia is:

> Griefe onely makes his wretched state to see
> (Even like a toppe which nought but whipping moves)
> . . . . . .
>
> But still our dazeled eyes their way do misse,
> While that we do at his sweete scourge repine,
> The kindly way to beate us to our blisse.
> (Arcadia, II.xii. (Wks.I.227f)

These lines become:

> And yet (O Heaven) thy heavy hand is in't.
> I have seene my litle boy oft scourge his top,

> And compar'd my selfe to't: naught made me ere
> Go right, but Heavens scourge-sticke.
> (D.M., III.v. 92-95)

Webster has not only transformed Sidney's sluggish, awkward phrases into smooth-flowing lines of great poetry, he has also made a somewhat abstract image intensely personal. The Duchess' sorrow is truly felt in these lines. It is now her little boy that scourges his top and Heaven's scourge stick[32] now must make her spin aright.[33]

Likewise, the image in IV.i. 14-17 is polished considerably. The lines from Sidney are:

> Leave womens minds, the most untamed that way
> of any: see whether ... a dogge growe not
> fiercer with tying? what dooth jelousie
> /of a father for his daughters/ but stirre
> up the mind to thinke, what it is from which
> they are restrayned.
> (Arcadia, I.iv (Wks., I.25)

This is condensed into:

> 'Tis so: and this restraint
> (Like English Mastiffes, that grow feirce with tying)
> Makes her too passionately apprehend
> Those pleasures she's kept from.
> (D.M., IV.i. 14-17)

"Dogge" becomes "English Mastiffes." "Stirre up the mind to thinke" becomes "Makes her too passionately apprehend," and "what it is from which they are restrayned" becomes "Those pleasures she's kept from." All of these changes make the image more specific and significant.[34]

A third example of a recast image from Sidney is

V.ii. 31-32.[35] This change is minor, but it too demonstrates a particularizing of an image. Sidney's reads:

> Eagles we see fly alone; and they are but sheepe, which alwaies heard together.
> (Arcadia, I.ix. (Wks, I.56)

Webster's revised version is:

> Eagles commonly fly alone: They are Crowes, Dawes, and Sterlings that flocke together...

By substituting crows, daws and starlings, Webster has made the comparison more vivid and more coherent. Birds are contrasted with birds. Moreover, crows, daws and starlings are not just birds; they are dirty birds, and by choosing these birds, Webster has added connotations of ugliness to his image. Sheep are a herd and they suggest only a lack of independence: whereas crows, daws and starlings are a mob and they suggest a total lack of order plus the lack of beauty and stateliness inherent in the eagle.

A final image which shows Webster's ability to incorporate what he borrowed from Sir Philip Sidney, is in V.ii.232-238. The image, as found in Sidney, is:

> But in deede this direct promise of a short space /of time before her longing is satisfied/, joyned with the cumbersome familiar of womankinde, I meane modestie, stayed so Gynecias minde, ...not unlike to the condemned prisoner, whose minde still running uppon the violent arrivall of his cruell death, heares that his pardon is promised, but not yet signed.
> (Arcadia, III. (Wks, II. 31)

In Webster:

To-morrow! get you into my Cabinet,
You shall have it with you; do not delay me,
No more then I do you: I am like one
That is condemn'd: I have my pardon promis'd,
But I would see it seal'd: Go, get you in,
You shall see me winde my tongue about his heart,
Like a skeine of silke.
(D.M., V.ii.232-238)

Webster removes the unnecessary clause and transforms the rest into a series of brief phrases, giving the verse a rapid speed and the dialogue a sense of urgency and immediacy. The urgency of the situation is thus reinforced by the urgency of the language, creating an excellent example of the dramatizing of narrative. We have already noted that this passage is typical of most of Webster's quick, jerky verse, made up of short phrases and snatches of ideas.

Truly, Webster used Sidney wisely and well. Where Sidney's prose was striking, Webster let it remain striking; and where it needed sharpening for the purpose of his verse, he sharpened it. Occasionally, however, Webster slipped. In several places in The Duchess of Malfi, what he has borrowed does not fit in with the rest of the scene. Such an instance is in IV.1.108-111. In this passage, a servant makes a quick entrance and exit without realistic motivation. The only purpose of the intrusion is to work in an admirable line from Arcadia. The Duchess is talking with Bosola when a servant suddenly interrupts her.

> Duch. What are you?
> Ser. One that wishes you long life.
> Duch. I would thou wert hang'd for the horrible curse
> Thou hast given me...
>
> (D.M., IV.i. 108-111)

The same incident is found in Arcadia, III.xxiii (Wks, I.485):

> he heard one stirre in his chamber, by the motion of garments; and he with an angry voice asked, Who was there? A poore Gentlewoman (answered the partie) that wish long life unto you. And I soone death to you (said he) for the horrible curse you have given me.

Admirable as the incident is in Arcadia, it only detracts from the movement of the scene in The Duchess of Malfi. Webster was trying too hard to work in a retort he admired from Sidney, and he sacrificed the overall effect of the scene for that retort.

By isolating one author from whom Webster borrowed and by inspecting the borrowed passages, one gains insight into that author and into John Webster. In this case, the author has been Sir Philip Sidney. Sidney's greatness is seen in the number of passages that Webster thought worthy of incorporation into his plays and Webster's greatness in those passages of Sidney's which he rewrote. Lastly, one can see that sometimes Webster was too enchanted by a line and could not discard that line even when the rest of the scene demanded it. However, such instances are rare; almost always Webster imitated successfully and this is somewhat amazing, for with such

writers as Sidney providing many great lines, the temptation must have been great for Webster to borrow even more than he did.

Webster's Debt to Montaigne

It is difficult to ascertain the influence Montaigne had upon Webster's thinking. A recent critic has attempted to prove that "Webster's extensive borrowing from Montaigne indicates his sympathy with Montaigne's ironic devaluation of mankind."[36] Marcia Lee Anderson had previously arrived at a similar conclusion: "Such writers as Montaigne ... stirred Webster not only by a fine phrase or a neat apothegm, but by the very stuff of their thought. This sort of imitation is far more illuminating than verbal parallels."[37]

On the other hand, R. W. Dent disagrees with this argument and provides convincing evidence not only that Webster was relatively untouched by Montaigne's thoughts but also that he failed to read Montaigne very closely at all. In reply to Miss Anderson, Dent writes, "Unfortunately we can draw few inferences of this kind. There is no reason whatever to believe that Webster was attracted to his actual sources by his reading the essayist. One would get into similar difficulties, I believe, in trying to trace the intellectual influence on Webster of any of his sources. Most of the ideas in his work were to some degree commonplaces of the age; what clearly attracted him in his reading were effective formulations of these ideas."[38]

Dent's study provides a necessary safeguard to those who wish to show Montaigne's great intellectual influence on Webster. Admitting that over forty certain verbal borrowings from Montaigne exist, Dent still claims that it is not evident that Webster read Montaigne's essays extensively. He feels that Webster merely skimmed the essays in search of vivid images and phrases. In support of his argument, he cites the fact that many of the borrowed passages appear in italics or "immediately adjacent to italics."[39] Of course, such passages would immediately catch the eye. Dent further notes that many of the Montaigne passages first appear in Marston's plays, from which Webster borrowed occasionally.

Dent's view is accepted in this study with some slight reservations. Montaigne did exert a tremendous influence on his age, and Webster was a product of that age. The truth of the degree of influence probably lies somewhere between the extremes posited by Dent and Miss Anderson. Even so, this paper is concerned only with verbal borrowings, and there is no question of Montaigne's influence on Webster for phraseology. Dent cites twenty-nine relatively certain borrowings from Montaigne in <u>The Duchess of Malfi</u> alone. He states that Webster was repeatedly attracted to Montaigne's prose style because of its "concise sententiousness and freshness of wit."[40] Moreover, Webster found Florio's prose translation of

Montaigne appealing.

The first borrowing from Montaigne provides an example of Webster's twisting of the meaning of a source to serve his own purpose. In I,i. Bosola, intense with evil and melancholy, speaks with the wisdom of Montaigne in the poetry of Webster. Montaigne, quoting Seneca, writes:

> The reward of wel doing, is the doing, & the fruit of our duty, is our dutie.
> (Montaigne, II.xvi, p. 365)

Webster alters this to:

> I have done you better service then to be slighted thus: miserable age, where onely the reward of doing well, is the doing of it!
> (D.M., I.i. 32-34)

Montaigne is analyzing the actions of virtue that are noble in themselves and seek no external reward. Webster attempts to disengage and adapt Montaigne's philosophy by inserting it into the mouth of Bosola. Ironically, Bosola's view is in direct contrast with Montaigne's philosophy. For Bosola finds no merit in the mere doing of something, and, of course, Bosola's doing well lacks all virtuous implications. The malcontent has every right to complain about Montaigne's philosophy. Bosola speaks for himself and praises his accomplishments, but Montaigne dispraises the self-praiser. Hence, Montaigne's ideas are reversed and become a strong argument for Bosola in pleading his

case to the Cardinal. Webster's phrase then means just the opposite of Montaigne's, even though most of the words are retained.

A passage from Montaigne, again placed in the mouth of Bosola, which remains almost intact is:

> It was told Socrates, that one was no whit amended by his travell: I beleeve it well (saide he) for he carried himselfe with him.
>
> (Montaigne, I.xxxviii, p.119)

Webster's version is:

> I have knowne many travell farre for it, and yet returne as arrant knaves, as they went forth; because they carried themselves alwayes along with them...
>
> (D.M., I.i. 42-45)

One important change which Webster makes in these lines is the change from "he" to "many" (the change from singular to plural increases the disparity be increasing the number of participants). Also, the addition of "arrant knaves" alters the tone of the passage considerably.

A second passage which illustrates the reversal of tone, again placed in the mouth of Bosola, is II. i. 27-30. The passage from Montaigne reads:

> Who hath not heard of hir at Paris, which onely to get a fresher hew of a new skinne, endured to have hir face flead all over.
>
> (Montaigne, I.xl, p. 132)

The rewritten passage reads:

> There was a Lady in France, that having had the small pockes, flead the skinne off her face, to make it more levell; and whereas before she look'd

> like a Nutmeg-grater, after she resembled an abortive hedge-hog.
>
> (D.M., II.i. 27-30)

The lines from Montaigne are preceded by a discussion of men who are capable of persistent mockery and laughter in contempt of pain. He mentions the gladiators who do not become cowards in the face of death and then discusses women who go through pain to make themselves beautiful. But Webster changes the serious, admiring love of Montaigne to the humorous mockery of Bosola, who refers to the woman who tries to make herself beautiful, but only succeeds in making herself uglier. There is little verbal change in the adaptation. Again Webster alters a noun, this time from the specific "Paris" to the general "France." By inserting "small pockes" as the cause, he makes the image more vivid and concrete. Webster also makes the image more ghastly and brutal by intensifying the passive "endured to have hir face flead" to the active "flead the skinne off her face, to make it more levell." Still the verbal change is not as striking as the overall change in tone.

An interesting example of another of Webster's borrowing techniques appears in Bosola's reply in Act II after Antonio asks whether he is studying to become a wise man. Bosola answers:

> Oh Sir, the opinion of wisedome is a foule tettor, that runs all over a mans body...
>
> (D.M., II.i. 81-82)

These short lines are a combination of two sources. The first part comes from Montaigne:

> The opinion of Wisedome is the plague of man.
> (II.xii, p. 282)

The second phrase stems from Henry Crosse's Vertues Common-wealth (1603):

> a daungerous disease, and a sore that must be healed, least it fester and run ouer the whole body.
> (sig.N3^{v})

Webster combines both these sources into one concise line. It could be conjectured that the two sources followed one another in his commonplace book under the subject heading "Diseases."

Directly following the above statement, Bosola again speaks a line from Montaigne. The lines as found in Montaigne are:

> ... if simplicitie directeth vs to have no evil, it also addresseth vs, according to our condition to a most happy estate.
> (Montaigne, II.xii, p. 285)

Bosola says:

> if simplicity direct us to have no evill, it directs us to a happy being.
> (D.M., II.i. 82-83)

The first part is a verbal duplication, but Webster draws a stronger parallel by repeating "direct," thereby adding a more rhythmical quality to the statement. The poetry is further improved by the insertion of "happy being," a more direct and common-place term. Webster then improved the borrowing by

repetition, word choice, and concise sharpness of phrase.

There is one more passage in this block of borrowings from Montaigne. Immediately following, a line is culled from Montaigne:

> Whence proceedes the subtilest follie, but from the subtilest wisdome?
>
> (II.xii, p. 284)

Its counterpart in The Duchess is:

> For the subtlest folly proceedes from the subtlest wisedome...
>
> (D.M., II.i. 83-84)

Webster merely turns Montaigne's question into a direct statement; there is very close verbal resemblance between the two. The tone again is altered, however; Bosola is speaking ironically when he tries to say he is honest, and we know he is not.

This examination reveals several different facets of Webster's habits. The first and most evident is that he often employs a series of borrowings from the same author in rapid succession. (There are four more borrowings from Montaigne before 1.160).[41] Second, we are struck with the reversal in tone of many of the borrowings. Third, we wonder at the number of Montaigne borrowings spoken by Bosola. And our wonder is increased considerably when we realize Flamineo, Bosola's counterpart in The White Devil, speaks a great majority of the lines culled from Montaigne. Of the twenty-nine borrowings from Montaigne cited by Dent in The Duchess of Malfi, sixteen are

spoken by Bosola. Of the twenty borrowings in The White Devil, twelve are given to Flamineo. Is there a pattern here, and if so, what is the possible explanation? Does placing the preponderance of borrowings from Montaigne in the mouths of the skeptical observers of mankind indicate that Webster and Montaigne were kindred spirits? I don't think so. As far as a pattern goes, the only sound explanation one can advance for the speeches being placed in the mouths of these two railers against mankind is that there were many speeches in Montaigne fit for such use. And as far as the second question goes, I have tried to show that often Webster's lines mean just the opposite of what they did in Montaigne even though they incorporated the same words. Therefore, I don't feel that one can say Webster was overly influenced by Montaigne's skepticism simply because his cynics speak Montaigne's skeptical lines. It always must be remembered that these characters are types, malcontents, and Webster would search for lines fitting for their utterance. This does not mean that he accepted Montaigne's outlook on life. Indeed it might be argued that since Montaigne's phrases are put into the mouths of the villains, Webster is reacting against Montaigne. But this assumption would lead us to the same close reading of Montaigne that we have attempted to discount. Our position is that Webster was not influenced for or against Montaigne. Or as Robert Ornstein has said,

"Webster borrowed from Montaigne without being influenced by his view of life."[42]

If we continue our search through the phrases lifted from Montaigne, we find many which provide us with examples of Webster's sharpening of images and phrases into brilliant lines of poetry. For instance, the comparison in II.i.103-109 is considerably sharpened and pruned. The lines are based on Montaigne:

> The soules of Emperours and Coblers are all cast in one same mold. Considering the importance of Princes actions, and their weight, wee perswade our selves, they are brought forth by some as weighty and important causes; wee are deceived: They are mooved, stirred, and remooved in their motions, by the same springs and wardes, that we are in ours. The same reason that makes vs chide and braule, and fall out with anie of our neighbours, causeth a warre to follow betweene Princes; the same reason that makes vs whippe or beate a lackey, maketh a Prince (if he apprehend it) to spoyle and waste a whole Province.
> (II.xii, p. 274)

Webster's revision is:

> Some would thinke the soules of Princes were brought forth by some more weighty cause, then those of meaner persons -- they are deceiv'd, there's the same hand to them: The like passions sway them, the same reason, that makes a Vicar goe to Law for a tithe-pig, and undoe his neighbours, makes them spoile a whole Province, and batter downe goodly Cities, with the Cannon.
> (D.M., II.i. 103-109)

On the one hand, we see Webster generalizing the image to make it more universal. "Emperours" and "Coblers" are changed to "Princes" and "meaner persons." But, on the whole, Webster changes the general

to the specific and by so doing makes the image more vivid and concrete. The phrase "that makes a Vicar goe to Law for a tithe-pig" is much more concrete than Montaigne's "that makes vs chide and braule, and fall out with anie of our neighbours." Likewise, "and batter downe goodly Cities, with the Cannon" is added to provide specific detail, thereby enhancing the vividness of the image. Lastly, the revision shows the same cutting and pruning of verbiage that almost all of Webster's revisions illustrate. The overlong sentence, "They are mooved, stirred, and remooved in their motions, by the same springs and wardes, that we are in ours" is reduced to "The like passions sway them."

So we discern the same procedures employed by Webster in dealing with Montaigne's prose that we saw in his alterations of Sidney's prose. He cuts away the excess, usually particularizes the general and clarifies the vague. Always his recast form is more vivid than the original.

One last example of this pruning and sharpening of an image from a long involved discussion can be seen in V,iii. No analysis is needed. Webster has simply replaced the indistinct with vivid, concrete words.

Montaigne is speaking of ancient Rome, which

> doth interest, concerne and passionate me. And therefore can I not so often looke into the situation of their streetes and houses, and those wondrous-strange ruines, that may be saide to

reach downe to the Antipodes, but so often must I ammuse my selfe on them. Is it by Nature or by the errour of fantasie, that the seeing of places, wee know to have bin frequented or inhabited by men, whose memorie is esteemed or mencioned in stories, doeth in some sorte moove and stirre vs vp as much or more, than the hearing of their noble deedes, or reading of their compositions? Tanta vis admonitionis inest in locis: Et id quidem in hac urbe infinitum; quacumque enim ingredimur, in aliquam historiam vestigium ponimus /Cicero, De Finibus 5. 1-2/. So great a power of admonition is in the verie place: And that in this Citty is most infinite; for which way soeuer wee walke, wee sette our foote upon some Historie.

(III.ix, p. 597)

The image, in Webster, is pruned to:

I doe love these auncient ruynes:
We never tread upon them, but we set
Our foote upon some reverend History.

(D.M., V.iii. 10-12)

Some passages from Montaigne provide us with excellent examples of Webster's use of questions. For instance, IV.ii, Bosola aska a question which the Duchess answers from Montaigne.

Bos. Doth not death fright you?
Duch. Who would be afraid on't?
Knowing to meete such excellent company
In th' other world.

(D.M., IV.ii. 215-218)

From Montaigne:

So many thousands of men, lowe-layde in their graves afore-vs may encourage-vs, not to fear, or be dismayed to goe meete so good company in the other world... .

(I.xxv, p. 75)

Here, Bosola's question, repeated by the Duchess, is answered directly from Montaigne.

A last specific trait of Webster's which comes to light from a survey and inspection of his borrowings from Montaigne is a trait which was immediately apparent when we surveyed Sidney -- that is the great extent to which Webster is indebted to sources. Almost all of the lines Webster wrote have behind them a specific source, and I will illustrate this with just a few brief examples from Montaigne. For example, Webster did not even invent his own place names. Montaigne had written:

> Rarenes and difficultie giveth esteeme unto things. Those of Marca d'Ancona in Italie, make their vowes, and goe one pilgrimage rather ... vnto our Ladie of Loreto. In the countrie of Liege, they make more accoumpt of the Bathes of Luca; and they of Tuscanie esteeme the Baths of Spawe more then their owne.
> (II.xv, p. 357)

Bosola says:

> I would wish your Grace, to faigne a Pilgrimage
> To our Lady of Loretto, (scarce seaven leagues
> From faire Ancona)...
> . . . . . .
> Car. In my opinion,
> She were better progresse to the bathes at Leuca,
> Or go visit the Spaw
> In Germany...
> (D.M., III.ii. 353-364)

Thus, we see that even for names of cities and towns, Webster relied on specific sources.

Many think that Webster's great lines are his own inventions; some undoubtedly are, but most stem ultimately from sources. A line which is often cited as one of Webster's best is V.v. 94-95:

...I hold my weary soule in my teeth,
'Tis ready to part from me...

The image is lifted from Montaigne:

> The soule must be held fast with ones teeth, since the lawe to liue in honest men, is not to liue as long as they please, but so long as they ought.
>
> (II.xxxv, p. 430)

Webster's debt to Montaigne, then, is the impetus he provided for great lines as well as for insignificant details. By and large, Webster's indebtedness to Montaigne is the same type that we found in Sidney, phraseology rather than ideology. Moreover, Webster changes Montaigne's phrases usually for the better, just as he did Sidney's. There are many borrowings that appear almost verbatim; however, no one borrowing is an exact replica of Montaigne. Webster often changes only a word or two in order to condense prosaic and wordy passages, to enrich the abstract with the concrete, or to change the tone and mood of an idea or a description.

As with Sidney, Webster imposes his own style on Montaigne's words and phrases. Webster knew how to incorporate what he borrowed into his text; he knew how to enrich images with concrete words and how to cut the inessential. We begin to see with Bogard that Webster developed plagiarism to a fine art. "The degree of transmutation is perhaps sufficient justification of his plagiaristic activities."[44]

Webster's Borrowings from John Donne

As we have seen, the case for Webster's borrowing from the Arcadia or from Montaigne is certain. No one can doubt the connection between Webster and these two writers; less certain, and therefore more puzzling, as Dent remarks, is Webster's relationship to Camden, Hall, Montreux, Nashe, Whetstone and Donne. Because of the relatively few passages culled from these men, it is difficult to pass a final judgement on Webster's debt to them.

Webster's debt to John Donne stems from surprisingly contemporary works. Webster worked on The Duchess of Malfi from 1612 to 1613. The play was probably first performed in the spring or autumn of 1614 or the winter of 1613-14.[45] Donne's Ignatius his Conclave was published in 1611, and The First Anniversary and the Funerall Elegie appeared together also in 1611. The Second Anniversary, containing Of the Progresse of the Soule, was printed the following year. It is not so surprising that Webster borrowed from such recent works, however, when one considers the nature of these sources. They are natural quarries for inspiration and assistance in The Duchess. Ignatius satirizes an Italian Cardinal, and a Cardinal is an important figure in Webster's play. Moreover, The Anniversaries eulogize Mistress Drury, who died young.

Her situation is vaguely similar to the Duchess' then, although the manner of her death is quite different. And yet, Webster is not concerned with these similarities of position and character, and his debt to Donne remains, as it does to the others, in the area of phraseology, rather than character and plot development.

We note immediately that there are two distinct concentrations of Donne borrowings, the first in III,v, and the second in IV,ii. We might expect some significance or pattern in these concentrations; however, I can suggest no explanation except that such concentration would be likely if Webster's commonplace book were arranged by author.[46] These borrowings cover too wide a variety of subjects and are spoken by too many different characters to justify any other inference.

We can begin our study of Donne by tracing the borrowings first from Ignatius his Conclave. In I,i, Bosola gives a characterization of the Cardinal which has been lifted from Ignatius.

> ... so indued with the Diuell, that he was able to tempt, and not onely that, but (as they say) even to possesse the Diuell...
> (p. 15)

Bosola speaks these words:

> Some fellowes (they say) are possessed with the divell, but this great fellow, were able to possesse the greatest Divell, and make him worse.
> (D.M., I.i. 45-48)

To his Cardinal, Webster adds the further condemnation

"and make him worse."

Webster condenses and sharpens a long prose passage into a few telling lines in his next use of Ignatius. The passage in Ignatius reads:

> I will write to the Bishop of Rome: he shall call Gallilaeo the Florentine to him; who by this time hath throughly instructed himselfe of all the hills, woods, and Cities in the new world, the Moone. And since he effected so much with his first Glasses, that he saw the Moone, in so neere a distance, that hee gaue himselfe satisfaction of all, and the least parts in her, when now being growne to more perfection in his Art, he shall haue made new Glasses, and ... he may draw the Moone, like a boate floating vpon the water, as neere the earth as he will.
> (pp. 116-117)

Webster borrows the idea of lunar inhabitants and the phrase "Gallilaeo the Florentine." The Cardinal wants to point out that he is fixed when compared to Julia or women in general, who are inconstant and fickle. One would have to search the moon or go to another planet "to find a constant woman."

> We had need goe borrow that fantastique glasse
> Invented by Galileo the Florentine,
> To view another spacious world i' th' Moone,
> And looke to find a constant woman there.
> (D.M., II.iv. 24-27)

Following this major revision, Webster, strangely enough, copies the next passage almost verbatim. The passage in Ignatius is:

> ... Princes, who though they enuy and grudge, that their great Officers should haue such immoderate meanes to get wealth; yet they dare not complaine of it, least thereby they should make them odious and contemptible to the people.
> (p.92)

Webster's version is:

> Great princes, though they grudge their Officers
> Should have such large, and unconfined meanes
> To get wealth under them, will not complaine
> Least thereby they should make them odious
> Unto the people...
>
> (D.M., III.1. 36-40)

The borrowing is direct, typical of the sententiae so common in Webster.

In III,v, the Duchess notes that Ferdinand will not be convinced of Antonio's love until he sees it. Likewise, Loyola says that he will not believe any man's word until he sees proof by actions.

Donne:

> ...wee consider not the entrails of Beasts, but the entrails of souls, in confessions, and the entrails of Princes, in treasons; whose hearts wee do not beleeue to be with vs, till we see them.
>
> (Ignatius, 1611, p. 89)

Webster:

> That he so much distrusts my husbands love,
> He will by no meanes beleeve his heart is with him
> Untill he see it...
>
> (D.M., III.v. 47-49)

Here we have another instance in which Webster borrowed a phrase with little intention of taking any meaning from the source of his borrowing.

It is easier to see Webster's characteristic adaptations, alterations, and distortions in the revisions from The Anniversaries, I think, than in those from Ignatius. Webster's transformed version is usually

a simplified form of one of Donne's complicated constructions, and this simplified form is usually more poetic. The material borrowed from Donne's poetry is shorter in length, generally, than that of the prose adaptations. As Dent points out in his introduction, Webster rarely borrowed from poems.[47] These generalizations certainly hold true for Webster's use of Donne's poetry.

In the first borrowing from The Anniversaries, Webster seizes a quality from Mistress Drury and imposes it on the Duchess.

> Whose twilights were more cleare, then our mid-day;
> Who dreamt devoutlier, then most use to pray.
> (Of the Progresse of the Soule, 1612, 463-464)

Webster's revision reads:

> Her dayes are practis'd in such noble vertue
> That sure her nights (nay more, her very Sleepes)
> Are more in Heaven, then other Ladies Shrifts.
> (D.M., I.i. 205-207)

Webster's dignified blank verse is more stirring than Donne's somewhat stilted rhyme.

There is a great change in tone in the next possible borrowing from The Anniversaries.

Webster:

> And for thee (vilde woman,)
> If thou doe wish thy Leacher may grow old
> In thy Embracements, I would have thee build
> Such a roome for him, as our Anchorites
> To holier use enhabite: Let not the Sunne
> Shine on him, till he's dead: Let Dogs, and Monkeys
> Onely converse with him, and such dombe things
> To whom Nature denies use to sound his name.
> (D.M., III.ii. 116-123)

Perhaps from Of the Progresse of the Soule, 1612:

Think that no stubborne sullen Anchorit,
Which fixt to'a Pillar, or a Graue doth sit
Bedded and Bath'd in all his Ordures, dwels
So fowly as our soules, in their first-built Cels.
(169-172)

The view of an anchorite and the wretched condition in which he dwells is the same in both passages. But Donne's anchorite is compared to the imprisoned soul of man; his condition of filth and depravity is like man's body, which foully surrounds the soul. Webster, on the other hand, has Ferdinand suggest to the Duchess that she save Antonio by isolating him like an anchorite. The suggestion is that in his loneliness, no one will disturb or discover him and that such a lonely existence is better than death. Despite all these similarities, we must remember that the allusion was common; Dent also suggests a possible source in Dekker.[48]

Webster often borrowed a passage from an author for one work and then reused the same passage for another work. Such seems to be the case with our next borrowing from Donne. However, again we must exercise caution, for the identification is somewhat tenuous since, as Dent notes, there is very little verbal resemblance between the two passages in Webster and the following passage from Donne and since the essential image is not uncommon.

may't not be said
That as a sundred clocke is peecemeale laid,
Not to be lost, but by the makers hand

Repolish'd ...

(Funerall Elegie, 1611, 37-40)

Webster:

Heaven hath a hand in't; but no otherwise,
Then as some curious Artist takes in sunder
A Clocke, or Watch, when it is out of frame,
To bring 't in better order.
(D.M., III.v. 75-78)

Webster:

Or like a dyall broke in wheele or screw,
That's tane in peeces to be made go true:
So to eternity he now shall stand,
New form'd and gloried by the All-working hand.
(A Monumental Columne, 241-244)

Comparisons of man or the whole universe to a clock were popular, usually showing how God (the clockmaker) resets time, order, or the erring clock.

The next borrowing from Donne further illustrates Webster's fondness for sententiae.

Wee seeme ambitious, Gods whole worke t'undoe;
Of nothing hee made us, and we strive too,
To bring our selves to nothing backe.
(The First Anniversary, 1611, 155-157)

Webster:

Heaven fashion'd us of nothing: and we strive,
To bring our selves to nothing...
(D.M., III.v.97-98)

The borrowing is simply repeated.

On the other hand, Webster reworked the next passage with great artistry. Originally, the image is that of the body exploding like a cannon in order to free the captive soul within.

Thinke that a rustie Peece, discharg'd, is flowne
In peeces....

While Bosola is torturing the Duchess because of her love for Antonio, she cries out pathetically:

O misery: like to a rusty ore-char[g]'d Cannon,
Shall I never flye in peeces?
(D.M., III.v. 121-122)

Once more we view Webster culling away the deadwood and thereby heightening and clarifying the image. Specifically, he intensifies the image by making "discharg'd" into "ore-char[g]'d" which shifts the emphasis from the explosion of the cannon and the subsequent flight of the bullet to the explosion of the cannon only, and the shattering of it into pieces. Webster is concerned only with the violent end of his Duchess, not with the liberation of her soul.

Once in a while, Webster did retain the tone of his source as is evident in the next borrowing from Donne.

When no Physitian of redress can speake,
A joyfull casuall violence may breake
A dangerous Apostem in thy breast.
(Of the Progress of the Soule, 1612, 477-479)

Webster's version reads:

A great Physitian, when the Pope was sicke
Of a deepe mellancholly, presented him
With severall sorts of mad-men, which wilde object,
(Being full of change, and sport,) forc'd him to laugh,
And so th'impost-hume broke...
(D.M., IV.ii. 42-46)

Webster took Donne's simple advice and developed into a

brief narrative, effective as prelude to his action.

We see another instance of Webster employing a question in order to incorporate an answer from a source in the next usage of Donne.

> This curded milke, this poor unlittered whelpe,
> My body...
>
> (Of the Progresse of the Soule, 1612, 165-166)

In Webster:

> Thou art a box of worme-seede, at best, but a salvatory of greene mummey: what's this flesh? a little cruded milke, phantasticall puffe-paste...
> (D.M., IV.ii. 123-125)

Dent can find no source for the worm-seed or green mummy reference. The ultimate source of the "cruded milke" is Job, X.10. Webster may have used either the Bible or Donne, but the latter is much more likely, for Webster rarely borrowed from Scripture. Both quotations make the same comparison of the weakness of the flesh to curdled milk.[49]

In the Funerall Elegie, Webster found the seeds for the Duchess' passionate statement in IV.ii. 241-242. Donne's lines are:

> And the worlds busie noyse to overcome,
> Tooke so much death, as serv'd for opium.
>
> (Funerall Elegie, 1611, 79-80)

Webster's:

> ...Come violent death,
> Serve for Mandragora, to make me sleepe...
> (D.M., IV.ii. 241-242)

Here, Webster has transformed the description of the

calm death of the young Mistress Drury into a remarkably appropriate utterance for a mature woman who is to die violently at the hands of vicious murderers. The Duchess' lines illustrate the short bits and snatches within which Webster works at his best.

The last borrowing from Donne that occurs in the play is in V.ii. Donne's lines are:

> And colour is decai'd: summer's robe growes
> Duskie, and like an oft dyed garment showes.
> (The First Anniversary, 1611, 355-356)

Webster's:

> I do not thinke but sorrow makes her looke
> Like to an oft-di'd garment...
> (D.M., V.ii. 111-112)

Donne's summer robe becomes Webster's Duchess, whose sorrow makes her look "duskie." In both cases, the idea is that use of too much dye destroys color rather than strengthening or enchancing it. Webster borrowed the phrase, but did little to expand the original idea into a unified image.

From the comparison of Donne and Webster, we again see the likelihood of the use of a commonplace book arranged by author and possibly even by work. It is obvious that Webster preferred prose to poetry, and he thought and wrote in spurts rather than in long or detailed units. His ideas and images, when linked with theme, do, however, give a sort of patterned unit. One

cannot state authoritatively that Webster always changed his Donne sources for the better, but one can say that Webster altered to suit his particular needs and that the alteration better suits the dramatic phrasing than any given source. Often the linking idea between the two writers is fragmentary, but in most cases, it is there. And, it is this little spark of an idea and the neat statement of it that sets Webster in motion.

Almost all of Webster's borrowing from John Donne is invested in The Duchess of Malfi. In some instances, Webster transforms elaborate description into a brief--and usually vivid or vigorous image. But Webster shows his superiority as a poet not only by condensing material into striking images, but also into striking utterances for his characters. Taken as a whole, Webster's phrasing is much clearer than that of Donne. It is probably unfair to compare the two men any further since they are working in different genres which do not have the same artistic ends.

Webster's Borrowings from Joseph Hall

One of the authors from whom Webster borrowed, but to whom he was not overly indebted was Joseph Hall, an early seventeenth century character writer. Hall's *Characters of Virtues and Vices*, published in 1608 and *The Epistles*, published in 1611, were definitely known before Webster wrote his first great tragedy, *The White Devil*.[50] However, Dent gives only seven borrowings from Hall in this play, and since all of them are common ideas or fragments, it is possible that they may not have come from Hall at all. John Russell Brown, in the footnotes to his edition of *The White Devil*, gives no credit to Hall for any of the parallels that Dent cites.

The Duchess of Malfi is another play, however; Dent cites twenty-one borrowings from Hall in this play, and Brown agrees on fifteen of them. The majority of the quotations from Hall in *The Duchess* are from his *Characters*, and many of the character types fit well with the personalities in the play. For example, Bosola and the Cardinal are both described by lines taken from the "Ambitious," while Antonio is compared to the "Humble," the "Honest," and, in a negative way, the "Profane." Even so, there does not seem to be any particular pattern since Webster uses Hall rather indiscriminately for many of his characters. The only justifiable conclusion we

can arrive at is the same one we have come to in connection with the previous writers: Webster does improve Hall's lines which are usually short, pat definitions of a character type. They often have a sermonizing tone about them which Webster negates. As usual, Webster shortens the lines and assimilates the main idea into the context of his play.

A good example of this appears early in the play when Antonio is describing the Cardinal. The source of the description is Hall's "Ambitious" character:

> His wit so contriues the likely plots of his promotion, as if hee would steale it away without Gods knowledge.
> (Char., 1617, p. 231)

Antonio says:

> ...he should have beene Pope: but in stead of comming to it by the primative decensie of the church, he did bestow bribes, so largely, and so impudently, as if he would have carried it away without heavens knowledge.
> (D.M., I.1. 163-166)

The idea is a fairly simple one: the ambitious character pays enough so that God will not even know what is happening. Webster changes the verb "steal" to "carry" probably to suggest the trickery and deception in the Cardinal's character.

Another instance in which Webster changes the meaning in his adaptation from the original can be seen in the following:

To matter of Religion his heart is a peece of

dead flesh, without feeling of loue, of feare....
(Char., "Profane," 1617, p.220)

The altered form is:

Make not your heart so dead a peece of flesh
To feare, more then to love me...
(D.M., I.i. 517-518)

The passage is relatively unchanged except for the change in overall meaning. The Duchess is saying that Antonio's fear of her could be greater than his love for her and thus his heart would be a dead piece of flesh, whereas Hall seems to imply that the absence of both feelings create dead flesh, and he is referring to religion rather than love.

In the next example, however, Webster does not change the idea of the borrowing; rather he transforms the wording from a near dead line to a statement alive with meaning.

Thus:

Euery vertue hath his slander and his iest
to laugh it out of fashion...
(Char., "Profane," 1617, p.221)

becomes:

What appeares in him mirth, is meerely outside;
If he laugh hartely, it is to laugh
All honesty out of fashion.
(D.M., I.i. 170-172)

The basic idea is the same, but rather than simply repeating Hall, Webster gives a concrete illustration of what Hall is saying; he uses the lines but makes them work for him.

A few lines later, Webster alters Hall's description

of the "Flatterer" from

> He hangs vpon the lips which he admireth, as if they cœuld let fall nothing but oracles....
> (Char., 1617, p.224)

to

> They that doe flatter him most, say Oracles
> Hang at his lippes...
> (D.M., I.1. 188-189)

Again, the idea and the remaining words are basically the same. All Webster did was to change the subject in the second part of the line from "they" (lips) to "Oracles."

In the next quotation, Webster shortens the borrowed idea even more. Here he uses only one attribute -- a low roof -- and does not even state the characteristics or anything else from Hall. The quotation is from the "Humble Man:"

> He is ... a rich stone set in lead; and lastly, a true Temple of God built with a low roofe.
> (Char., 1617, p. 230)

Webster places the words into the mouth of the Duchess as she says:

> This goodly roofe of yours, is too low built...
> (D.M., I.1. 479)

No mention is made of Antonio's being a stone with a base setting or of a temple of God. Of course, by this time, the reader realizes that Antonio is a humble character, and to use more from Hall would be to overemphasize this trait unnecessarily. The Duchess, in fact, wants to

change this characteristic somewhat, for she goes on to say:

> I cannot stand upright in't, nor discourse,
> Without I raise it higher: raise your selfe,
> Or if you please, my hand to helpe you...
> (D.M., I.i. 479-481)

In the very next line, Webster once again expands his borrowing from Hall. Hall's statement is:

> Ambition is ... an aspiring, and gallant madnesse...
> (Char., "Ambitious," 1617, p. 230)

Webster writes:

> Ambition (Madam) is a great mans madnes,
> That is not kept in chaines, and close-pent-roomes,
> But in faire lightsome lodgings...
> (D.M., I.i. 483-485)

Webster personifies Hall's simple metaphor further by saying that it is not chained or locked up, but

> With the wild noyce of pratling visitan/t_/girt_s,
> Which makes it lunatique, beyond all cure...
> (D.M., I.i. 485-487)

Webster intensifies the image by making madness a lunatic.

Sometimes, as in his use of other writers, Webster makes very little change in his borrowings from Hall. The following lines are taken almost verbatim from the sources:

> Ant. Were there nor heaven, nor hell,
> I should be honest: I have long serv'd vertue,
> And nev'r tane wages of her.
>
> Duch. Now she pales it...
> (D.M., I.i. 503-505)

In ll. 503-4, "Were ... honest" comes from Hall's

"Honest Man:"

> ... if there were no heauen, yet he would be vertuous.
>
> (Char., 1617, p. 201)

The remainder is from the Epistles:

> Serue honestie euer, though without apparent wages: shee will pay sure, if slow.
>
> (VI.x, 1617, p. 473)

All Webster does is to interchange honesty and virtue, which appear to be interchangeable terms, and to insert the statement in the conversation. This juxtaposition of two separate borrowings from one author further illustrates the use of a commonplace book arranged by author.

Later, Ferdinand tells the Duchess:

> For I account it the honorabl'st revenge
> Where I may kill, to pardon...
>
> (D.M., IV.i. 39-40)

The source says almost the same thing:

> he holds it the noblest reuenge, that he might hurt and doth not.
>
> (Char., "Valiant Man," 1617, p. 203)

Webster's revision, however, offers us a striking example of the way in which he instinctively creates his poetry by the use of the strong, even violent, word. The kill-pardon contrast is much stronger than Hall's "hurt" and "doth not" hurt.

A similar example is Bosola's remark to Ferdinand about the murder of the Duchess' children, which is taken

from Hall:

> Other sinnes speak, this crieth...
> (Epistles VI. viii. 1617, p. 467)

Bosola states:

> Other sinnes onely speake; Murther shreikes out...
> (D.M., IV.ii. 278)

Dent adds that Hall's passage was written to a man condemned for murder. Again, Webster makes his passage much more vivid by the inclusion of the word "murther" and by the substitution of the more alarming phrase "shreikes out" for "crieth."

The next borrowing puts forth a commonplace argument found in Hall, adapted by Webster. Bosola is telling the Duchess to forget Antonio, a base, low fellow.

> Bos. One of no Birth.
>
> Duch. Say that he was borne meane...
> Man is most happy, when's owne actions
> Be arguments, and examples of his Vertue.
> (D.M., III.v. 143-146)

The question is whether goodness comes from birth or from virtue, and Webster is merely dusting off an old argument when he switches from Antonio's low birth to a man's being happy because of his virtuous action. Moreover, Webster's statement of the old argument reads more easily than the source:

> It is an happy thing when our owne actions may
> be either examples, or arguments of good.
> (Epistles VI.ix. 1617, p. 470)

There is one place where a borrowing from Hall does

not fit into the context as well as it might have, however. The Cardinal and Ferdinand are discussing the Duchess.

> Ferd. Foolish men,
> That ere will trust their honour in a Barke,
> Made of so slight, weake bull-rush, as is woman,
> Apt every minnit to sinke it!
> Car. Thus Ignorance, when it hath purchas'd honour,
> It cannot weild it.
>
> (D.M., II.v. 46-51)

Although the parallel may be true, it does not seem to fit well into the conversation. There seems to be no logical connection between the interjected material and the subject under discussion. Why should the Cardinal remark about ignorance when they are talking about the Duchess? Accepting this disparity, the borrowing does sound better than the source:

> He so studies, as one that knowes ignorance can neither purchase honour, nor wield it.
> (Char., "Truly Noble," 1617, p. 206)

Of course, there are other examples of Webster's borrowing from Hall in The Duchess of Malfi, but the samples given here should be sufficient to show how Webster gives life to Hall's statements by making them more concrete and vivid, by making them work for him. And as with his borrowings from major sources, he was almost always successful in incorporating them without disruption into the context and meaning of his play.

Webster's Borrowings from Matthieu and Guazzo

We noted that almost all of Webster's borrowing from Hall was concentrated in The Duchess of Malfi. Just the opposite occurs in Webster's use of Pierre Matthieu and Stefano Guazzo. The White Devil contains more than twice as many borrowings from Matthieu than The Duchess, and the proportion is even greater for Guazzo's The Civile Conversation. We also noted that Webster showed a strong attraction to continental literature in translation when he chose his sources, and both these later sources are Continental translations. Matthieu's supplement to de Serre's General Inventory of the History of France was translated into English by Edward Crimeston in 1607, and The Civile Conversation, a prose picture of Italian life and morals in the sixteenth century, was translated into English by George Pettie in 1581.

We need inspect just a few borrowings from Matthieu and Guazzo to complete our picture of Webster's methods of transmutation. In Matthieu, Webster found a rather touching passage spoken by Admiral Chastillon's imprisoned wife which stimulated his poetic plagiarism.

> I am inured to my afflictions, as a Galley slaue to his oare. Necessity teacheth me to suffer constantly, and custome makes my suffrance easie.
> (de Serres-Matthieu, General Inventorie, p. 988-989)

In The Duchess of Malfi, Webster gives this speech to the Duchess, who is being plagued by Bosola and Ferdinand. Through his alterations, however, Webster has both expanded and intensified the passage from Matthieu:

> I am acquainted with sad misery,
> As the tan'd galley-slave is with his Oare,
> Necessity makes me suffer constantly,
> And custome makes it easie...
> (D.M., IV.ii. 29-32)

In the first line of the passage, Webster has replaced the two words "inured" and "afflictions" with "acquainted" and "sad misery." The effect of the first of these substitutions is to make the passage less abstract by personifying misery without making the passage sentimental. The substitution of "sad misery" for "afflictions" does the same thing, and, at the same time, it serves to emphasize the misery. Webster adds only one word to the second line (tan'd), but this addition brings out the innate assonance in Matthieu's line by adding another "a" to "as," and "galley" and makes the image more vivid. In the next line, Webster substitutes one word, "makes" for "teacheth." This substitution alters the meaning of the line and puts the emphasis on the deterministic nature of "necessity," rather than the voluntary compliance implied by Matthieu's word "teacheth." In the last line, Webster replaces "my suffrance" with "it." Perhaps, the desired effect of this is again to keep balance between control and sentimentality by avoiding a second reference to suf-

fering. One thing that is clear is that Webster's syntax is explicable only in light of the original. That is, "it" in Webster has no antecedent -- except "sufferance" in Matthieu. This is another instance in which the source is required to make full sense of the Webster passage.

In IV, i, Webster chose not to change Matthieu at all.

> Hee sayd vnto him that the King of Spaine
> resoulued not to studie any more in the
> Bookes of an others heart....
>
> (de Serres-Matthieu, General Inventorie, p. 1033)

Webster:

> I will no longer study in the booke
> Of anothers heart...
>
> (D.M., IV.i. 19-20)

The next borrowing illustrates the more typical Websterian procedure. Twenty lines later, Webster again uses Matthieu:

> A father how great & powreful soeuer, cannot thinke too soone nor to often, to breed vp the youth of his child in vertue, nor to assure his fortune: I say a child without distinction, for although the Law doth distinguish Bastards from them that are lawfully begotten, yet nature makes no difference.
>
> (de Serres-Matthieu, General Inventorie, p. 1027)

This appears in The Duchess:

> For though our nationall law distinguish Bastards
> From true legitimate issue: compassionate nature
> Makes them all equall.
>
> (D.M., IV.i. 42-44)

Although Webster makes only minor changes, the changes

taken together are significant, for they all serve to strengthen the contrast between the Young Duke by the Duchess' first husband and those children of her second marriage with Antonio. The phrase "true legitimate issue" is much stronger than "them that are lawfully begotten," just as is the positive phrase "Makes them all equall" for "nature makes no difference." Moreover, by inserting the word "compassionate," Webster has emphasized the contrast between the natural and the artificial, the inner code and the outer code.

We noted in the introduction Webster's fondness for stories and parables, and such a parable is probably provided by Matthieu in III, ii. This is the parable of Reputation.

> Upon a time Reputation, Love and Death,
> Would travell ore the world: and it was concluded
> That they should part, and take three severall wayes:
> Death told them, they should find him in great
> Battailes:
> Or Cities plagu'd with plagues: Love gives them councell
> To enquire for him 'mongst unambitious shepheards,
> Where dowries were not talk'd of: and sometimes
> 'Mongst quiet kindred, that had nothing left
> By their dead Parents: stay (quoth Reputation)
> Doe not forsake me: for it is my nature
> If once I part from any man I meete,
> I am never found againe...
> (D.M., III.ii. 145-156)

This is conceivably based on Pierre Matthieu, The Heroyk Life and Deplorable Death of the Most Christian King Henry the fourth, (1612), sig. Ss1^{v}:

> Reputation...the goddesse of great courages is so delicate, as the least excesse doth blemish it,

> an vniust enterprise dishonoreth it.... It is a spirit that goes and returnes no more. They report that water, fire, and reputation, vndertooke to goe throughout the world, and fearing they should goe astray, they gaue signes one vnto another: Water said that they should finde her where as they sawe reeds, and fire whereas the smoke appeared, loose me not said reputation, for if I get from you, you will neuer finde mee againe.

However, this was a very popular parable; Dent cites one other possible source[51] and there are undoubtedly more. All one can authoritatively state is that Webster did rely on a source for the passage.

Webster's borrowings from Guazzo in The Duchess of Malfi reflect the same close workmanship and revision that most of the passages from Matthieu and the other authors do. We have already noted that the use of these last two authors is not extensive in The Duchess, but nonetheless, it is important. Webster called on The Civile Conversation for a number of reasons, but his most numerous borrowings are passages concerned with courtly wisdom for princes and flatterers. Some of the other borrowings are related to the qualities of a gentleman (and woman), plus a number of proverbs (four on love and marriage), and some ideas which cannot be directly paralleled but influence certain passages. We will inspect just one of these passages from The Duchess of Malfi.

When Webster went on from the writing of The White Devil to The Duchess of Malfi, in 1613, he was still

under the influence of Montaigne, but Guazzo had given way to Sidney. However, in one notable passage, Webster returns to Guazzo's work for more than a mere and questionable passing allusion. Antonio's enthralled description of the Duchess in I, 1, is borrowed from the description of a beautiful lady by Guazzo's Anniball, which goes on at such length that one wishes Anniball were as weary to speak as the reader is to read. Through deletion, Webster turns a tedious discourse into effective dramatic poetry. This long passage compared to its revision provides one of the classic examples of Webster's art of transformation.

> ...that which maketh men have her in admiration is, that notwithstanding the surpassing excellencie, which is in her, shee maketh no more account of her selfe then other women doe, and seemeth to shewe, that shee doeth not knowe what good parts are in her. So that by this discrete humilitie, shee is exalted to higher dignitie, and men have her in the more honour. I say then that this Lady in conversation is singuler, and mervellous: for of all the noble partes in her, you shall see her make a most delightfull harmony. For first, to the gravenesse of her wordes, agreeth the sweetenesse of her voyce, and the honestie of her meaning: so that the mindes of the hearers intangled in those three nets, feele themselves at one instant to be both mooved with her amiablenesse, and bridled by her honesty. Next, her talke and discourses are so delightfull, that you wyll only then beginne to bee sory, when shee endeth to speake: and wishe that shee woulde bee no more weary to speake, then you are to heare. Yea, shee frameth her jestures so discretely, that in speakyng, shee seemeth to holde her peace, and in holding her peace, to speake. Moreover, when shee knoweth a matter perfectly, and discourseth of it discretely, to the great commendation of her witte, yet shee wyll seeme to speake of it verie doubtfully, to shew her great modestie. She wyll also in talke

cast oft times upon a man such a sweete smyle, that it were enough to bryng him into a fooles Paradise, but that her countenance conteineth such continencie in it, as is sufficient to cut off all fond hope. And yet shee is so farre from solemne lookes, and distributeth the treasure of her graces, so discretely and so indifferently, that no man departeth from her uncontented.... I cannot sufficientlye set foorth unto you the graces and perfections of this perfect peece, but for conclusion I will say, that shee may well bee set for an example, whereto other women ought to conforme them selves, to bee acceptable and well thoughte of in the companie they shall come in.

(Guazzo I, 241-242)

Webster:

For her discourse, it is so full of Rapture,
You onely will begin, then to be sorry
When she doth end her speech: and wish (in wonder)
She held it lesse vaine-glory, to talke much,
Then /you/ pennance, to heare her: whilst she speakes,
She throwes upon a man so sweet a looke,
That it were able raise one to a Galliard
That lay in a dead palsey; and to doate
On that sweet countenance: but in that looke,
There speaketh so divine a continence,
As cuts off all lascivious, and vaine hope.

(D.M., I.i. 194-204)

Webster's greatest talent is his creation of short, vivid images, and this passage abounds with them. There are a number of ways and reasons why this passage stands out over Guazzo's version. First, Webster's version is lively poetry which adapts itself to short images better than the colder prose of Pettie's translation. Second, Webster combines and shortens Guazzo's phrases and dispenses with his redundancy. For example, Webster's "discourse" in line 194 combines Guazzo's "talk and discourse." Guazzo repeats images of the lady's modesty,

whereas Webster does not. Third, word choices and changes give Webster's passage a tone all of its own. Such words as "Rapture" and "pennance" add flavor to the passage. Line 204 included "lascivious" which is more outright and down to earth than the partially hidden meaning of Guazzo's "fooles Paradise." Fourth, the images are what really make the passage a success: the vivid, attention-getting images of raising one from a dead palsy to a Galliard and the shattering of flattering mirrors in view of a living example.

It is important to note again how valuable it is to know the source of a passage in Webster's works. "Not surprisingly, in plays so extensively built out of borrowings, one service performed by a knowledge of sources is the clarification they provide for individual passages."[52] F. L. Lucas was troubled about the incoherency of lines 194-198 from The Duchess of Malfi above, until Miss Anderson produced the source and pointed out that "your" of line 198 should parallel the "you" of Guazzo in the respective place.[53]

In conclusion, the same generalizations may be made about Webster's borrowings from Matthieu and Guazzo as were made for his major sources: 1) Webster's interest seems to have centered mainly on images, 2) Webster invariably alters these images in order to make them more effective, and 3) Webster modifies his borrowings in

order to bring out the poetic quality that is innate in the original passage. Thus, we see that Webster was no indiscriminate borrower, but that he constantly exercised poetic control over those borrowed passages which he included in his plays.

Conclusion

As we realize from our survey of scholarship, many have cited sources for Webster's borrowings and as many have repeated Lucas' statement that Webster betters what he borrows. In the words of Frederick L. Boas, "He introduced also into his dialogue echoes of his varied reading -- from Montaigne, Sidney's Arcadia, Guazzo's La Civil Conversatione... and even ... Shakespeare.... But upon all his materials Webster's genius wrought so effectively, that few plays in the Elizabethan canon have so authentic a stamp of individual inspiration...."[54]

However, few critics have attempted any sort of analytical procedure which would illustrate the process of the "before" and "after," the changes which the passages undergo. It is our hope that this study has partially filled this gap in scholarship. By providing first an overall description of Webster's main poetic techniques, with special emphasis on those techniques which derived from his borrowing habits, we felt ready to proceed to the minute inspection of the commentary. Each author whom we examined was chosen for a somewhat different reason -- Sidney because of the wealth of the material which he provided, and because of the degree of transmutation many of his passages experienced; Montaigne for the same reasons, but also to demonstrate that Webster's

indebtedness was not in the intellectual, but in the artistic realm; Donne, because we could exhaust his borrowings without being too superficial and because his poetry gave us a glimpse of the atypical; and Hall, Matthieu and Guazzo simply to flesh out our picture. Furthermore, we dismissed Webster's debt to unidentified sources for his many aphorisms and moral maxims in the introduction so that we could concentrate on the known borrowings from these authors. Every parallel passage that we did investigate had a relatively certain source. Lastly, three of the six authors whom we studied were continental writers who had been translated into English -- Montaigne, Matthieu and Guazzo. This is only natural, for, as we noted, this type of literature was Webster's favorite stockpile.

Perhaps we can be justifiably accused of stacking the cards in Webster's favor even though selection of passages was as objective as possible. Yet, we did include many passages which remained unchanged and some which were not incorporated skillfully into the play in order to show that sometimes Webster's borrowed material was not improved upon and that sometimes it should not have been borrowed in the first place. However, our examples do prove that Webster generally was successful in his plagiaristic artistry.

Footnotes

[1] For a brief but excellent discussion of this phase of Elizabethan dramaturgy, see pp. 1-5 of Hardin Craig's article, "The Shackling of Accidents: A Study of Elizabethan Tragedy," Philological Quarterly, XIX (January, 1940), 1-19. Craig concludes his discussion, "The Renaissance was thus schooled in a method of imitation" (p. 5).

[2] For a more specific discussion of Webster's borrowing habits, see R. W. Dent, John Webster's Borrowing (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1960), pp. 1-8.

[3] John Russell Brown, ed. The White Devil (London, 1960), pp. xli-xlii.

[4] Dent, p. 5.

[5] This paper is concerned with verbal borrowing only. Webster also relied on others for plot material, episodic material and larger ideas. This phase of indebtedness has been amply described by Gunnar Boklund in The Duchess of Malfi: Sources, Themes, Characters (Harvard, 1962).

[6] R. W. Dent has already noted the number of verbal borrowings in his book-length collection cited above.

[7] John Addington Symonds, ed., The Best Plays of

Webster and Tourneur, The Mermaid Series, (London, 1888).

8 Charles Crawford, "John Webster and Sir Philip Sidney," Notes and Queries, X, series 2 (1904), 221-223, 261-263, 303-304.

9 F. L. Lucas, ed., The Complete Works of John Webster, 4 vols. (London, 1928).

10 Lucas, I, 59-63.

11 Lucas, pp. 62-63.

12 Marcia Lee Anderson, "Webster's Debt to Guazzo," Studies in Philology, XXVI (1939), 192-205.

13 Anderson, p. 193.

14 All articles are listed in the bibliography.

15 See note number two.

16 All of the parallel passages quoted in this paper are taken from Dent. After the quotation, I give Dent's reference to the original work.

17 John Russell Brown, ed., The White Devil (London, 1960); John Russell Brown, ed., The Duchess of Malfi (London, 1964).

18 Brown, The White Devil, p. xxxvi.

19 All quotations from Webster are from F. L. Lucas, The Complete Works of John Webster (London, 1927). I chose to use Lucas' edition rather than Brown's to facilitate cross reference with Dent.

20 A good example of repartee appears in the opening of the play when Ferdinand, Castruchio, Silvio, and the others discuss court affairs (I.i. 87-138) or when Bosola and the officers enjoy a bawdy conversation in II.ii. 32-48. As can be seen in both cases, Webster was a master of equivocation and pun. So Brown.

21 Both had been previously discussed in earlier studies. See especially Rupert Brooke's description of Webster's verse style in his book John Webster and the Elizabethan Drama (New York, 1916), pp. 141-156; and Hereward T. Price's article, "The Function of Imagery in Webster," PMLA, LXX (1955), 717-739.

22 Dent, p. 256.

23 Dent notes that Webster depended mainly upon the prose writings of others, preferring a continental writer translated into English. Such works would likely be unfamiliar to the English theater-goers. He seldom used fellow dramatists' works, perhaps because they were likely to be recognized. Alexander's plays, from which Webster borrows extensively in The Duchess of Malfi, were

never staged. See Dent, "John Webster's Debt to William Alexander," Modern Language Notes, LXV (1950), 73-82. The preponderance of commonplace comparisons, analogies, and images, mentioned previously, considerably complicates the problem of source identification as we shall see.

[24] Ian Jack, "The Case of John Webster," Scrutiny, XVI (1944), 38.

[25] Jack, p. 39.

[26] Travis M. Bogard, The Tragic Satire of John Webster (Berkeley, 1955), p. 19.

[27] Seymour L. Gross, "A Note on Webster's Tragic Attitude," Notes and Queries, IV (1957), 374.

[28] Sanford Victor Sternlicht, "John Webster's Imagery," Dissertation Abstracts, XXIII (1963), 2905.

[29] James L. Calderwood, "The Duchess of Malfi: Styles of Ceremony," Essays in Criticism, XII (1962), 134.

[30] Henry W. Wells, Elizabethan and Jacobean Playwrights (New York, 1939), p. 49.

[31] See V.11. 175-181.

[32] George P. V. Akrigg, "The Name of God and 'The Duchess of Malfi'," Notes and Queries, CXCV (1950),

221-233, noting that there is evidence that the process of censorship was applied to The Duchess of Malfi, claims that "Heavens scourge-sticke" was originally "God's scourge-sticke." However, "Heavens scourge-sticke" naturally follows Heaven's heavy hand. Akrigg is probably correct in assuming censorship has been applied to the play, but he is not correct in assuming that almost all of the "Heaven" passages should read "God."

33 Inga-Stina Ekeblad, "Webster's Wanton Boyes," Notes and Queries, II (1955), 294-295, dealing with V.iv. 75-77, notes that Webster's images often contain the components of an emblem in a condensed form -- "the picture, the motto, and the moral application" (p.294). She compares V.iv. 75-77 with this image (III.v.78-81) noting that each image is of a human situation and that in each "an 'example' is given, with pictorial clearness and minute attention to details, and its implication and import are developed in the form of a more or less explicit sententiae." Miss Ekeblad's discussion of the emblematic quality of some of Webster's images is both original and precise.

34 The addition of "passionately" and "pleasures" are, of course, instrumental in eliciting Ferdinand's emotional outcry, "Curse upon her!" (D.M., IV.i. 15)

35 G. K. Hunter, "Notes on Webster's Tragedies," Notes and Queries, IV, (1957), 53-55, I think wrongly, stated that this passage was also influenced by Harrington's Orlando Furioso, Canto XX, stanza 69:

> And said she thought it great disgrace and shame
> So many in one company to see,
> For crows (quoth she) and pigeons do the same
> . . . . . .
> But Falcons that do flie at stately game
> . . . . . .
> Shun company, and love to go alone.

Dent ignores Hunter and this source. These two sources provide an excellent illustration of the difficulty involved in authoritatively stating the source for a particular passage.

36 Bodtke, Richard A., "Tragedy and the Jacobean Temper: A Critical Study of John Webster," DA., XVII (1957), 1550.

37 Marcia Lee Anderson, "John Webster's The White Devil and The Duchess of Malfi" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 1940), p. 22. (Quoted in Dent, p. 42).

38 Dent, p. 41.

39 Dent, p. 42.

40 Dent, p. 51

41 I am quite convinced that Webster's commonplace

book was arranged by author rather than by subject. But also, I think that there was some system of cross reference by subject listed under the author headings. Again, however, this is, of necessity, conjectural.

42 Robert Ornstein, The Moral Vision of Jacobean Tragedy (Madison, 1960), p. 134.

43 For another example, this time of both question and answer provided by Montaigne, see D.M., IV.ii. 118-120.

44 Bogard, p. 4.

45 For a full discussion of the problem of dating, see Brown, The Duchess of Malfi, pp. xvii-xxvii.

46 I dwell on this obvious point only because Dent seems to think that Webster's commonplace book was, for the most part, arranged by topic. See Dent, p. 16.

47 Dent, pp. 43-45.

48 The subprior resolves to be "(shut up from worldly Light,/Betweene two walls), and dye an Anchoryte" (If It Be Not Good, III.iii. 130-131).

49 Dent, p. 237.

50 The White Devil was first performed very early in 1612. Dent thinks that it was probably written before

1610 (Dent, pp. 57-58). For a full discussion of the problem of dating, see Brown, The White Devil, pp. xx-xxiii.

51 Dent, p. 210.

52 Dent, p. 20.

53 Anderson, p. 194.

54 Frederick S. Boas, An Introduction to Stuart Drama (London, 1946), p. 194.

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